

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, 1 year ago tomorrow marks the anniversary of the Federal Reserve Board reporting that student loan debt exceeded \$1 trillion. What that means for the average student loan borrower in America is a debt level of \$27,000. That's just the average. Many students graduate, sadly, with debt levels of six figures.

Despite the fact that we have that looming burden on middle class families all across the country, in 67 days the Stafford student loan program interest rate will double from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent, adding even further interest debt to students unless Congress acts.

Mr. Speaker, I've introduced H.R. 1595, the Student Loan Relief Act, with my colleague in the Senate, Senator JACK REED—we have 95 cosponsors in the House—which will extend the lower rate for 2 years and give this House time to come up with a comprehensive solution for higher education access and affordability, which, again, extends back to giving students better information for when they enter college and helping those who graduated in terms of allowing them to refinance.

It is time, however, to pass the extension of the lower rate. Let's not go backwards. Let's help middle class families all across America.

BUDGET CONFEREES

(Mr. BERA of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BERA of California. It's core to our job, Mr. Speaker, to pass a responsible budget. That's job number one. A budget tells us how we're going to be stewards of the taxpayer resources.

One of my first acts in Congress was to cosponsor the No Budget, No Pay Act. We now have a budget that the House has passed; we have a different budget that the Senate has passed; and the President has submitted his budget. It is now time for us to go to conference.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to appoint conferees so we can get a real budget and start moving this country forward. That is core to our job. We must produce a budget in order to start addressing our debt and deficit and making sure that the public understands what our priorities are.

Mr. Speaker, now's the time to act. I ask that you appoint conferees, and let's get this country moving forward.

JOBS, JOBS, JOBS

(Ms. WILSON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it's now been 843 days since I arrived in Congress, and the Republican leadership has not allowed a single vote on serious legislation to address our unemployment crisis.

At the current rate of job growth, we will not get to pre-recession unemploy-

ment levels until after 2020. This means another decade of people losing their health care, losing their homes, and losing their dignity.

Where is the outrage?

Congress is delaying America's recovery and making their plight worse by pursuing destructive policies like the sequester instead of productive policies like the President's American Jobs Act.

The American Jobs Act deserves a vote.

Mr. Speaker, the American people are looking to you to address the only deficit that matters right now: our jobs deficit. It's time for a vote on a serious jobs bill.

Our mantra here in Congress should be: jobs, jobs, jobs.

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS AND THE KENTUCKY DERBY

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago I came to the floor to congratulate Virgin Islands jockey Kevin Krigger on his Santa Anita win and qualifying for the Kentucky Derby. Kevin will be riding Goldencents co-owned by Rick Pitino and trained by Doug O'Neill.

Since then, another Virgin Islands jockey, Victor Lebron, riding Frac Daddy, co-owned by Carter Stewart and Ken Schlenker and trained by Ken McPeck, has also qualified.

They are making history, and the entire Virgin Islands is gearing up to cheer wildly for them on May 4 as they make a "Run for the Roses."

Another Virgin Islander, Gareem Nicholas, is an assistant trainer for Derby-bound horse It's My Lucky Day.

As a person who grew up in a horse racing family and who has always followed the sport, I could not be prouder than to see my young men riding and training in such a prestigious event, and I hope to be there to witness it.

Although there have been many people who have had a role in the success of the young Crucian jockeys who began their career on the Randall Doc James Racetrack in my home island of St. Croix, I again congratulate their parents Averill Simmonds and Albert Krigger, Jr., and Reina and Victor Lebron, Sr. The name Julio Felix also stands out as a mentor of theirs and many other young Virgin Island jockeys.

I wish both jockeys luck in their maiden runs at the Kentucky Derby, but they and Nicholas are already winners to me and in the eyes of their fellow Virgin Islanders.

GMO LABELING

(Ms. GABBARD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight an issue that's very

important to me, to my constituents in Hawaii, as well as to people all across the country.

I've long been a supporter of requiring labeling for food containing genetically engineered, or GE, products. Food is a basic necessity in our everyday lives, and people have a right to know what's in the food we're eating.

Today I'm joining a strong coalition, led by Senator BOXER and Congressman DEFazio, to introduce the Genetically Engineered Food Right-to-Know Act, which requires labeling of GE foods.

The Food and Drug Administration already requires labeling of more than 3,000 ingredients, additives, and processes, but it has resisted labels for GE foods. Changing this outdated policy would simply add GE foods to that robust list, which would not be cost prohibitive for companies or consumers.

More than 1.5 million Americans have filed comments with the FDA urging it to label GE foods, while surveys show more than 90 percent of people also support it.

Our legislation puts consumers first and empowers them to make informed choices for themselves and their families.

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HARMFUL EFFECTS OF SEQUESTRATION

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it has now been more than 7 weeks since the sequestration cuts were enacted, and we are in new and unprecedented territory. Furlough notices have already been sent to thousands of Federal employees and contractors, and many services are beginning to slow. While many of the worst consequences of the sequester have not yet been realized, the truth is that the wheels have been set in motion, and we are on a course that will have real impacts for millions of Americans.

As a result of employee furloughs, more than 1,200 flights were delayed yesterday because 1,500 air traffic controllers were laid off the job. Because of the Republican majority's refusal to address the effects of sequester sensibly, the FAA estimates that a third of the passengers will face delays during the furloughs, with up to 6,700 flights arriving late at more than a dozen major airports each day.

Beyond crippling our government's ability to provide critical services, the Republican sequestration plan is slowing the economic growth that our country so desperately needs.

In short, Republicans are putting the ability of our government to fully perform basic government functions that we need to keep us safe at risk.

We need to work on an approach that will fix sequestration while reducing our deficit sensibly.